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Comments on Report of the Inspector General on Young Female Employees

(These comments are the result of discussion among the Deputy Chief, Personnel Operations Division, the Chief, Clerical Assignment Branch, the Chief, Benefits and Counseling Branch, and the Deputy Executive Officer, Office of Personnel, and a representative of the Transportation Division, Office of Logistics.)

1. Recommendation No. 1: The Director of Personnel attempt to locate suitable hotels closer to K Street and west of 16th Street, N. W.

We agree with the observations made in the report about the deterioration in the neighborhood of the Meridian Hill Hotel and, from time to time, have asked the Office of Security to survey this and other neighborhoods in an effort to arrange temporary housing for employees in suitable neighborhoods. It has been a few months since such a survey was made but the results of the last check were that, in general, the other areas which might be suitable in terms of price range and convenience were on about the same level as the Meridian Hill area. Street crimes are something of a chronic problem throughout the District at this time even in some of the more expensive residential areas.

In our past consideration of other facilities which might be used, those which would seem to be of comparable quality and price range and reasonably accessible to 1016 16th Street are the YWCA (17th and K Streets, N. W.) and McLean Gardens (Wisconsin Avenue and Porter Street, N. W.). However, in neither case can advance reservations be made without a deposit. The YWCA has not been willing to commit themselves to taking all of our referrals. McLean Gardens will not accept a reservation unless the guest appears in person.

We shall continue to watch this situation in the future as we have in the past both to detect any further deterioration of the Meridian Hill neighborhood and to be alert to the availability of another more suitable facility.

2. Recommendation No. 2: The Director of Logistics explore with the General Counsel the legality of transporting employees from Rosslyn to Langley on Agency shuttle busses travelling empty.

The General Counsel has confirmed prior rulings that there is no legal basis for providing this service. (Attachment 1)

3. Recommendation No. 3:

a. The Director of Personnel stage a car-pool campaign during October to make sure that all employees have at least one chance to join a car pool before winter begins.

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b. The Director of Logistics place benches marked "Virginia," "Maryland," and "D. C." near the parking lots where those needing transportation can sit in full view of car owners.

We have arranged with GSA to provide the equipment for a self-service car pool locator system similar to that which has been operated with considerable success at the Pentagon, Navy Department, Veterans Administration, and other agencies. We expected to have this equipment installed and the system operative by October but GSA has encountered some unanticipated problems in supplying it. It should be available shortly and if it meets our expectations will make it unnecessary to experiment with the proposal in 3b.

4. Recommendation No. 4: The Director of Personnel explore the possibility of making a film to supplement orientation lectures to new employees.

This recommendation inspired considerable discussion but the conclusion reached was that it was not feasible to produce an Agency film concentrating on the problems of young women. However, we have undertaken to explore the possibilities of obtaining suitable films through the Office of Central Reference.

The practice of showing commercial films simply for entertainment has been discontinued. The observations made in the report concerning the reaction to some of the films which had been supplied to us contributed to this decision. Another important factor was the realization that some employees in the Interim Assignment Section were avoiding work assignments in order to view these films. ? (hu)

This matter relates also to some of the observations made concerning the availability of useful work assignments for personnel in the Interim Assignment Section. We have issued a new Notice (Attachment 2) concerning this service and have noticed a substantial increase in requirements. Even so, it is doubtful that sufficient unclassified work will be available at all times to occupy all IAS-assignees. In order to fill in the gaps, the Chief, Clerical Assignment Branch will explore the possibility of offering additional training-type activity both through formal arrangements with the Office of Training and through the use of qualified assignee-instructors in specific fields. (There was at one time a successful elementary language training program in the IAS supported by assignees qualified in various common foreign languages. While none of these produced secretaries and clerks fluent in any language, it did broaden their general language knowledge and provided an interesting and challenging experience. This was discontinued when there were no longer any qualified instructors among the IAS group.)

5. There were other suggestions contained in the report which were not offered as formal recommendations. These were also discussed with the following results:

a. Publication of an expanded Arnold Bus Lines schedule (par. 14, page 7): These schedules are not printed by the Office of Logistics but

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were supplied as a special service by the bus company. The company is unwilling to provide them in any greater detail because of the frequency of change.

b. Limited orientation time contrasted with excessive "free time" of IAS-assignees: In paragraph 19 (page 10) the Inspector remarks that he found it difficult to reconcile the use of Hollywood movies to fill in time gaps with the comment made by one of the regular orientation speakers that he felt pressed for time in his briefing. The explanation is this: the formal orientation schedule for clerical personnel is based on the requirement that ultimate job assignment of cleared personnel be delayed for as short a period as is consistent with the need to provide orientation. (Much of the material presented is classified and the lectures cannot feasibly be offered prior to full clearance.) There are competing requirements for this time but the schedule has been developed and is modified from time to time to provide adequate time to each speaker to cover required points.

c. Designation of Benefits and Services Division to provide housing guidance: We appreciate the Inspector's recognition of the need of these young women for advice and guidance in selecting permanent housing. The importance of seeking such advice is emphasized in the information sheet sent to them prior to entrance on duty and at each stage of entrance-on-duty processing and counseling. In spite of this, many (if not most) of these young women make permanent arrangements without seeking advice and the consequences are sometimes unhappy. We agree that the need for such advice is important but the problem seems to be more one of getting these young women to accept it than of providing it from a different source. In fact, responsibility for housing advice was initially a function of the Benefits and Services Division and it logically belongs with that organization. However, the physical separation between BSD and the Interim Assignment Section when BSD was located at Curie Hall presented a psychological if not a real barrier and the function was placed with the Clerical Assignment Branch with support in the form of listings and leads provided by BSD. We believe that this is still the more practical arrangement. Again, we offer the comment that the problem is not the availability of advice but impressing on the client the need to heed it. Also, the availability of suitable housing is no longer the problem that it was several years ago. In fact, the ease with which housing can be located and obtained serves to encourage these young women to make their own arrangements and discuss them with the IAS counselors only after a lease has been signed. Beyond the efforts which are already made to insist to the point of demanding that these young women accept the counseling which is available to them, we believe that further service in this area is unnecessary.

d. Designation of Benefits and Services Division as the central point for personnel counseling: This has been done and the counseling services available in BSD are described during entrance on duty orientation. The context of this suggestion implies, if we interpret it correctly, that personnel counseling should be exclusively the function of BSD, however, and we cannot agree. Counseling is a key function of supervisors and we

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believe it should remain so. The services of BSD are available on a referral basis to counsel in areas requiring professional or technical competence which a supervisor cannot provide or on a direct basis if the employee feels that she cannot or should not discuss her problem with her supervisor. The young women assigned to the Interim Assignment Section turn to the Chief, Clerical Assignment Branch for counseling in personal matters and we believe that counseling is properly provided at that point in these cases. Matters beyond her competence are referred to BSD.

e. Paragraph 34 (page 17): Clarification of provisional clearance to teen-age candidates and their parents: Our field recruitment officers do make every effort to inform candidates of the conditions of provisional clearance and these are repeated in our official correspondence. In most cases, it is not feasible for the recruiter to talk with the candidate's parents. We recognize the possibility that there may be selective listening on the part of an applicant and that she may unintentionally neglect to explain all of the circumstances of an employment offer to her parents. Further, while we think that most parents do read the official correspondence which we send to teen-age candidates, we know that this may not always be the case. We agree with the principle of this suggestion but, short of instituting some procedure such as obtaining the parents' signatures on a "Memorandum of Understanding," have no proposals for accomplishing it beyond those practices which are already in effect.

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